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## CHAPTER 3

### CONCEPTS OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

#### 1. Introduction

During the early part of the nineteenth century there was a limited but growing interest in the holistic needs of various sectors of the community, and in particular those of the working classes whom the Industrial Revolution had herded together in the rapidly expanding towns. The literature of the period indicates that this widening concern for the physical, mental, moral, spiritual and social well-being of the lower orders had associations with several organisations. Of special importance were organisations and individuals concerned with education, temperance, and political and social development of the working classes. Together, these helped to create the climate of awareness by which the work of the ailing voluntary institutions noted in Chapter 2 above was carried on in many places by the rate-supported public libraries, museums and art galleries.

The educationist Thomas Wyse noted in 1838 the ubiquitous existence of "subsidiary education, such as schools of science and art, schools of engineering, agriculture, navigation, &c. libraries, museums, galleries, collections, botanical gardens, &c.". He suggested that, together with mechanics' institutes and lyceums, a Board of National Education might render them more numerous and available with relatively little assistance and interference.<sup>1</sup> Looking at the possibilities from his viewpoint as a Member of Parliament (and in spite of having supported Buckingham's legislation for rate-supported local Public Institutions), he appears to have envisaged a working relationship involving local voluntary control but with national responsibility and assistance.

The mechanics' institutions movement has often been condemned for polluting its vocationally-oriented educational programme by replacing classes with popular lectures and concerts. The reading of fiction was discouraged, and the introduction of games was frowned upon, yet these were often meeting the expressed needs of members.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Wyse, T. On the lyceum system in America, with a consideration of its applicability to mechanics' institutions in this country. In, Central Society of Education. *Second publication*. (London: Taylor and Walton. 1838.) p.222.

<sup>2</sup> Hudson, J.W. *The history of adult education*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans. 1851.) pp.xii-xiii.

institutes were already becoming *de facto* community centres (especially when women and young people were admitted to membership), though this was neither recognised nor particularly encouraged as a practical concept.

## 2. Aspects of the temperance movement <sup>3</sup>

The temperance movement was also concerned in adult education, and greatly influenced the Working Men's Clubs which spread during the second half of the century. The Educational Chartism of William Lovett proposed that community centres be established, but that only soft drinks would be available there. The Public Institutions envisaged by James Silk Buckingham were a direct response to the Report of the Select Committee on Drunkenness, and the municipal public libraries after 1850 were also seen by many as a counter-attraction to the public house. In Wolverhampton, for example, Alfred Pratt (Honorary Secretary of the Free Library Adoption Committee), James Walker (first Chairman of the Free Library Committee), Isaac Jenks (who, as mayor, gave the funds for the first classroom in the Public Library), and John Elliot (first Librarian and Secretary of the Public Library classes), were all members of the local Temperance Society's committee in the early 1860's. <sup>4</sup> In moving the adoption of the Public Library Act at the ratepayers' meeting there in 1869, John Morris (a former mayor) said that the public library would "combat drunkenness and maintain our prestige as a commercial nation by improving our workers' skills". <sup>5</sup>

The Reform Act of 1832 had brought into the House of Commons a writer, traveller and former merchant sea captain called James Silk Buckingham as Member of Parliament for Sheffield, who had become a supporter of the temperance movement some years before. In fact, when he resigned his parliamentary seat in 1837, it was to continue his lecturing and temperance work full-time. <sup>6</sup> On his first mercantile captaincy he had experimented with on-board temperance, his ship's rules including abstinence from bad

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<sup>3</sup> This section has borrowed freely from the pamphlet: Reid-Smith, E.R. *Parliament and popular culture in the early nineteenth century: some strands in the history of libraries and adult education*. (Oldham: Research in Librarianship. 1969.), with amendments and additional material.

<sup>4</sup> Wolverhampton Temperance Society. *Report*. (1862).

<sup>5</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, 10 February 1869.

<sup>6</sup> Turner, R.E. *James Silk Buckingham 1786-1855: a social biography*. (London: Williams & Norgate. 1934.) pp.293-309.

language and drinking spirits, as well as regulations for the preservation of cleanliness and attendance at divine service.<sup>7</sup>

Many of the old village common lands had disappeared in the agrarian enclosures of the previous century, and the lack of traditional open spaces in the new towns of the Industrial Revolution had made the old sports impossible for the common people. As early as 1825 Buckingham had noted the unhealthy life style existing in built environments, where people's leisure hours were being spent in public houses and other sedentary pursuits. These new problems, exacerbated by the migration and density of the working class population, could only be solved by government measures to accomplish the reforms which individuals (and especially the workers themselves) were unable to effect.<sup>8</sup>

On 3 June 1834 Buckingham delivered a long speech in the House on the evils which drunkenness was causing to the working population of the country, and suggested measures to combat them. His zeal for the cause is reflected in the fact that his speech was reprinted in his own periodical the *Parliamentary Review*, and at least two of his pamphlets.<sup>9</sup> Towards the end of his oration he touched on his concept for indoor community cultural centres and outdoor places of recreation:<sup>10</sup>

In addition to such present remedies as may be added to meet the present evil, I shall be prepared to show that we might greatly prevent its further spread, by establishing adult as well as infant schools, aided by humble museums, and collections of works of nature and of art, so exciting to rational curiosity, and so powerful in refining the tastes and feelings of the least informed; as well as by instituting instructive and entertaining lectures on popular branches of knowledge, and encouraging the establishment of parish libraries and district reading-rooms, provided with cheaper and more innocent refreshments than the liquid poison now consumed; so as to afford to the labouring population that opportunity of social meeting, and cheap exhilaration, which their daily toils entitle, as well as prepare them to enjoy; and afford them opportunities for the development of their mental faculties and moral feelings, by that collision of opinion and interchange of sentiment, which, under sober exercise, is a fruitful source of attachment and esteem, but which, under the influence of intoxication, degenerates into bitterness and strife.

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<sup>7</sup> Buckingham, J.S. *Autobiography; including his voyages, travels, adventures, speculations, successes and failures, faithfully and frankly narrated; interspersed with characteristic sketches of public men with whom he has had intercourse, during a period of more than fifty years.* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans. 1855.) vol.1, p.271.

<sup>8</sup> Buckingham's *Oriental Herald*, 1825 VI, p.439.

<sup>9</sup> Buckingham, J.S. *Appeal to the British nation, on the greatest reform yet remaining to be accomplished. Read and adopted at the World's Convention, held in London, August 1846.* [pp.15-45 reprinted the speech from the *Mirror of Parliament*]; and, Buckingham, J.S. *Drunkenness: speech of Mr Buckingham on the extent, causes and effects of drunkenness as reported in No.XVIII of Mr Buckingham's Parliamentary Review.* (London. 1834.)

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* pp.43 and 15-16 respectively.

In spite of some opposition from the brewery faction, a Select Committee of the House was appointed "to inquire into the extent, causes and consequences of the prevailing vice of intoxication among the labouring classes of the United Kingdom, in order to ascertain whether any legislative measure can be devised to prevent the further spread of so great a national evil". Buckingham was appointed chairman of the Committee, amongst whose members were Brotherton, Hawes and Burrell—all of whom were active in community cultural development.<sup>11</sup>

The Committee completed its task very quickly, and its *Report* was ordered to be printed by the House on 5 August 1834. It is believed that Buckingham himself was the main author of the document, and the speed with which it was prepared suggests that much of the information for it was already to hand. Parliamentary reports are read by relatively few people, and so in a nationwide publicity campaign Buckingham had the whole paper reprinted at the British and Foreign Temperance Society for wider distribution in the same year.<sup>12</sup> Three paragraphs taken from the recommendations in the report are particularly pertinent:<sup>13</sup>

38. The establishment, by the joint aid of the Government and the local authorities and residents on the spot, of public walks, and gardens, or open spaces for athletic and healthy exercises in the open air, in the immediate vicinity of every town, of an extent and character adapted to its population; and of district and parish libraries, museums, and reading rooms, accessible at the lowest rate of charge; so as to admit of one or the other being visited in any weather, and at any time; with the rigid exclusion of all intoxicating drinks of every kind from all such places, whether in the open air or closed.

43. The removal of all taxes on knowledge, and the extending of every facility to the widest spread of useful knowledge to the humblest classes of the community

44. A national system of education, which should ensure the means of instruction to all ranks and classes of the people, and which, in addition to the various branches of requisite and appropriate knowledge, should embrace, as an essential part of the instruction given to every child in the kingdom, accurate information as to the poisonous and invariably deleterious nature of ardent Spirits ... and the inculcation of a sense of shame ...

As noted below, recommendation number thirty-eight was quickly developed and presented to the House by Buckingham in the following year as the Public Walks Bill and the Public Institutions Bill. Of the two other recommendations, number forty-three was the subject of a national campaign in which the voluntary institutions took part, whilst

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<sup>11</sup> Parliament: Select Committee on Inquiry into Drunkenness. *Report, with minutes of evidence, and appendix.* (1834.) Paper 559, vol VIII. p.ii.

<sup>12</sup> Buckingham, J.S. (Chairman). *Evidence on drunkenness, presented to the House of Commons, by the Select Committee appointed by the House to inquire into this subject, and report the minutes of evidence, with their opinions thereupon.* (London: British and Foreign Temperance Society. 1834.)

<sup>13</sup> Parliament: Select Committee on Inquiry into Drunkenness. *op.cit.* pp.viii-ix; Buckingham, J.S. (Chairman). *op.cit.* pp.588-589.

paragraph forty-four was not achieved for very many years—and then did not lay the emphasis on the evils of drink to the extent which the temperance movement would have liked.

### 3. Buckingham's Public Walks and Institutions Bills <sup>14</sup>

1834 was a particularly eventful year in the socio-political history of the country. It saw the transportation of the Tolpuddle unionists under what was not strictly a relevant law, as well as widespread riots and strikes centred on Oldham where much working-class solidarity was shown. At the beginning of the year Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union boasted 500,000 members but collapsed in exhaustion at the end. Much energy was then diverted into peaceful craft unionism, and regional dissatisfactions expressed themselves in various ways in the Chartist movement. Although the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 tended to view poverty as being largely the result of idleness, there was a growing awareness of the parts played by disease due to insanitary living conditions, and drunkenness due to general despair at the lack of other amenities in towns.

It was also a period in which petitions from voluntary and other institutions flooded into Parliament asking for the abolition of taxes on paper and duties on printed matter. The libraries and reading rooms of mechanics' and other institutes would benefit from the repeal of these taxes. It was against this background that Buckingham presented his private member's Bills to the House of Commons. Such a petition had been presented to the House of Commons by Sir Matthew White Ridley on 20 July 1831 on behalf of the Literary, Scientific and Mechanical Institution in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The first part of the petition complained at the lack of legal protection for the property of the Institution, because of the way in which then law then stood. The voluntary institutions were not corporate bodies in law, and a private Act of incorporation would have been far too expensive for any one body. This meant that not only were their funds not protected, but liability would be technically unlimited also. Protection for the property of literary societies and book clubs could therefore only be obtained by the passing of a general Act of Parliament.

The second part of the petition concerned the stamp duties, which the petition stated degraded the press, taxed knowledge which was "the source of morality, and the best guarantee of public tranquillity" and tended "to perpetuate the existing mass of

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<sup>14</sup> This section includes some material from: Reid-Smith. *op.cit.* pp.8-19.

popular ignorance, with its concomitant and appalling amount of vice and crime, and which, at this momentous crisis, is pregnant with the most alarming consequences". The petition went on to say that if the Parliament would repeal the taxes in order to promote the general intelligence, this would be "the most effectual means of averting impending evils, generating a just confidence between the People and the Legislature, and consolidating the peace and welfare of the community at large". The Institution had an excellent "library and apparatus necessary for illustrating the practical sciences" <sup>15</sup> and in later years was given a fine collection of working models. Exhibitions, railway excursions, soirées and a history class were all successful, but lectures and concerts were acknowledged by 1835 to have failed. <sup>16</sup>

The political base for Buckingham had already been set by the Select Committee on Drunkenness in 1834, but a new phase of the campaign opened on 15 June 1835 when he and John Philpotts presented in the House a number of petitions in favour of measures for the suppression of drunkenness. In what appears to be an allied move, Robert Wallace presented several petitions, asking "that all taxes on knowledge, especially those on newspapers, may be repealed", and saying that the petitioners "express their belief that ignorance is the great source of crime, and that the laws would not be so often transgressed if they were better known and understood". He continued that the petitioners "are willing to be proportionately taxed in any other way, if this obnoxious impost be removed". <sup>17</sup>

Wallace also presented a petition on behalf of the Greenock Mechanics' Library "in favour of the plan suggested by the Hon. Member for Sheffield for erecting halls for public instruction". Anticipating Buckingham's Bills, this petition prayed "the House to pass a Bill for enabling Communities to assess themselves for erecting Public Institutions, such as Halls, Lecture Rooms, Music Rooms, Libraries, Museums, etc., for the instruction and entertainment of the inhabitants in general". As far as Greenock Mechanics' Library was concerned, although their petition was doubtless at the instigation of Wallace who was Member of Parliament for Greenock and an abstinence friend of Buckingham, such a rate-supported institution would solve the financial

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<sup>15</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol.86, 1831, p.678; *Barrow's Mirror of Parliament*, 1831, p.700.

<sup>16</sup> Hudson. *op.cit.* pp.140-142.

<sup>17</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol.90, 1835, p.340; *Barrow's Mirror of Parliament*, 1835, vol.2, pp.1367 and 1369.



problems of all mechanics' institute type bodies, which were unable to obtain support from central government funds.<sup>18</sup>

The large number of petitions introduced by Philpotts, Buckingham and Wallace on the same day suggests that evidence was being built up in support for the envisaged legislation based on the recommendations of the 'Drunken Committee', and that the petitions against drunkenness and in favour of the repeal of taxes on newspapers were connected.

Joseph Brotherton (M.P. for Salford) seconded the motion to bring in Buckingham's two Bills because he thought that they would help to rescue the lower classes from too much drinking of spirits. Richard Potter particularly supported the public gardens concept, saying that "in that part of the country [Lancashire] with which I am concerned, a number of very large towns have sprung up, in consequence of the vast increase in the cotton-trade, without corresponding attention having been paid to the health, comfort, and recreation of the working class". Thomas Wyse (a supporter of the development of mechanics' institutes and lyceums) pointed out that public institutions and libraries were open to all classes without discrimination in many continental countries, and in support of the Bills said that as the means of public education were so few yet tended to the good of the state, the government should in all cases provide them. Buckingham, Wyse and Charles Augustus Tulke were given leave to prepare the Public Institutions Bill, whilst Buckingham, Brotherton and Potter were authorised to prepare the Public Walks Bill.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.1 The Public Walks Bills, 1835-1836

Although Buckingham himself had recorded the problems caused by the lack of common lands in towns, the Select Committee on Drunkenness took the ideas of Richard Slaney and others regarding open spaces for healthy recreation and gave them a temperance purpose. Slaney had been responsible for the motion in the House of Commons which resulted in the appointment of the Select Committee on Public Walks the previous year.<sup>20</sup> Buckingham's Public Walks Bill of 1835 was an attempt to give

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<sup>18</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol.90, 1835, pp.340-341; Barrow. *op.cit.* p.1369; *Greenock Advertiser & Clyde Commercial Journal*, vol.35, no.5090, 18 June 1835, p.2.

<sup>19</sup> Hansard. *op.cit.* cols.576-577; Barrow. *op.cit.* p.1900; *Journal of the House of Commons. op.cit.* p.452.

<sup>20</sup> Parliament: Select Committee on Open Spaces. *Report from the Select Committee appointed to consider the best means of securing open spaces in the vicinity of populous towns as Public Walks and Places of Exercise; with Minutes of Evidence.* (1833.) Paper 448, vol XV.

working families an opportunity to enjoy fresh air (such as it was in the industrial townships) after the long hours of confinement in the factories and mills. Again, no strong drinks were to be allowed in these parks and open spaces.

On 14 July 1835 Buckingham launched into an oration before the House on the evils of "the British vice of drunkenness", and as solutions proposed (a) a limitation on the number of public houses and their services, (b) the promotion of public literary institutions, and (c) the establishment of public walks near to all industrial townships. The two pronged attack on the problem was therefore to be the reduction of opportunities for drinking, and increasing the healthy alternative facilities for recreation of mind and body. Most of his speech, and the ensuing discussion, centred on public walks rather than the institutions, drawing on the interest already aroused in the subject since the Select Committee on Public Walks of 1833.

Buckingham had originally hoped to introduce three related Bills into the House of Commons, based on the recommendations of the Select Committee's report. However, the envisaged Bill to limit facilities for drinking was dropped—though it is interesting to note that the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Act of 1890 reducing the number of public houses brought some benefits to public libraries (Chapter 7 below) as well as to other technical education bodies. The history of the passage of the public walks provisions parallels that of the public institutions detailed below. Buckingham's strategy was to prepare separate Bills for public walks and public institutions, and to introduce them into the House in tandem.

This plan was effected in 1835 and 1836; in the former year his Bill "for Public Walks, Playgrounds, Baths, and Places of healthy Recreation and Amusement in the open Air" proposed that any fifty ratepayers in towns should be able to requisition the mayor (or other chief civil authority) to call a public meeting of ratepayers to vote on the matter of adopting the Act locally. On a successful two-thirds majority vote, a committee of twenty-one persons would then be elected to call for plans, designs and estimates. Capital was to be limited to 10s. (£0.50p.) for every inhabitant, and assessment to 6d. (2.5p.) in the pound, to provide five per cent interest on capital borrowed and five per cent annual redemption of capital. The whole sum would therefore be paid off in twenty years. It was proposed that this committee be chosen in the manner for councillors under the Municipal Reform Bill then before the House, one third of members retiring each year. <sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.29, cols.562-577 (esp.572-573), 1835; Barrow. *op.cit.* pp.1896-1900.

When both the Public Walks and Public Institutions Bills were withdrawn in those successive years of 1835 and 1836, it was decided to combine the provisions in the form of the Public Walks & Institutions Bill of 1837. This may have been partly to simplify what was in effect a joint measure, and perhaps also partly in order to reduce the number of private Bills before the House, and so increase the chance of its passing through all the stages.

### 3.2 The Public Institutions Bill, 1835

The purpose of the first of Buckingham's institutions Bills was to "facilitate the Formation and Establishment of Public Institutions for the diffusing of Literary and Scientific Information, including Libraries and Museums, with commodious Halls or Places of Public Meeting for Business or Entertainment". The educational and educative facilities were described, and the total origins made evident, in para 14: <sup>22</sup>

... the following shall be considered as primary objects, to be secured in all Public Institutions erected by the powers of this Act: -- 1. A spacious Hall, provided with fires, lights, tables and chairs as required, to serve as a Hall of Social Meeting for the Labouring Classes, at those periods of the year when recreation in the open air is impracticable: 2. A School Room, adapted for Infant teaching, with Class Rooms, for the studies of Youths of more advanced age: 3. Apartments for the meetings of Benefit Clubs, Sick Societies, Trade Committees or other Local Associations of mutual relief, and for the payment of wages, the sale of goods, or any other business for which such rooms are in constant requisition, but are now rarely to be procured, except at taverns and public-houses: 4. A Theatre, adapted for the delivery of Literary and Scientific Lectures, and for the exhibition of illustrative experiments, and containing the usual subdivision of seats, as in dramatic theatres, for the separate accommodation of different classes of Society: 5. A Library, Reading Rooms, Museum and Picture Gallery, adapted for the arrangement of such books, pictures, sculpture, specimens of natural history, and rare productions of nature and art, as may, by purchase or gift, be progressively accumulated in each: 6. That no Beer, Wine, Spirits or intoxicating drinks of any kind be permitted to be brought within the Public Institution, on pain of exclusion to the offending party for the period of a year at least; but that refreshments of every other description be permitted to be supplied...

The Bill was intended to allow the ratepayers of any town, city or borough anywhere in the United Kingdom to vote on the adoption of the Act for that locality.

The machinery for this Bill was identical to that proposed for public walks "on the principle of self-taxation and self-control". It was made clear that the public institutions should be for "all classes of inhabitants who desire social intercourse without the necessity of seeking it at the public house", but it was especially intended that access should be within the pockets "of the humblest classes". That such institutions were

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<sup>22</sup> The Public Institutions Bill, 1835; version dated 6 August 1835 as reprinted in: Kelly, T. *A history of public libraries in Great Britain, 1345-1965*. (London: Library Association. 1973.) pp.432-438.

primarily to have social, educational and educative functions is apparent from the facilities to be provided: "halls for conversational meetings—rooms for benefit societies, clubs, choral societies and committees of all kinds—a spacious theatre for lectures and scientific experiments—a museum for natural history—another for specimens of manufactures—a gallery of the fine arts for sculpture and paintings—and a library for general use". So every township of 10,000 or more inhabitants would have community cultural centres and gardens, paid off within twenty years but maintained by moderate subscriptions and donations. <sup>23</sup>

The formal first reading of the Bill came only two days after Buckingham's proposals to the House, when it was ordered to be printed and read a second time a week later. <sup>24</sup> The Second Reading was twice postponed before the Bill was read and committed to a Committee of the whole House on 30 July, despite Tooke's attempt to delay the reading for a further six months after objecting to the proposed power of assessment. Nine others spoke against Tooke, mainly on the ground that the committee was the correct place for such objections. Wyse (doubtless with the voluntary institutions in mind) pointed out that lack of assessment would mean support by public subscriptions, and that "those who had subscribed the most considerable sums would assume to themselves the right of dictating, and the institutions would fall into decay", whereas he wanted them to belong truly to the people. Thomas Wakley doubted that ratepayers would act if the legislation were passed, though he also considered the proposed public institutions to be highly important in that they would bring the "rich and the poor in contact with each other, who are at present so separated that no true sympathy or union can ever exist between them". <sup>25</sup>

The committee and report stages followed on 6 and 18 August, at which time (in spite of the amended clauses being agreed to) the battle was essentially one between Buckingham and Tooke concerning the final clause which stated "that a rate may be levied by a majority of the ratepayers, for the purpose of defraying the charge of maintaining public halls or institutions". Tooke's argument may be summarised under four main points:-

- (a) He objected to the powers given to a majority of ratepayers to compel a rate to be levied on a minority not wishing to adopt the proposed Acts,

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<sup>23</sup> Hansard. *op.cit.* col.573.

<sup>24</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons. op.cit.* p.456; Barrow. *op.cit.* pp.1926-1927.

<sup>25</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons. op.cit.* pp.479-499; Barrow. *op.cit.* p.2191.

and in any case at an open meeting it would be two-thirds of those attending and not two-thirds of all those eligible to vote; he further opined that there should be no assessment of the lowest and humblest classes.

- (b) The Bills would interfere with the proposed rights for municipal bodies under the Municipal Corporations Bill which was then struggling through parliament.
- (c) He objected to this additional tax burden at a time when efforts were being made to reduce taxation.
- (d) He understood that in any case Buckingham did not intend to proceed with legislation at this stage, but was merely trying to perfect the Bills.

Both Lord John Russell and Sir John Hobhouse thought that the Bill was badly constructed, and Warburton was also under the impression that Buckingham did not really expect the Bills to pass that session. Ewart (who was to introduce the first Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1850) stated that he appreciated the motives behind the measures, but preferred to see them contained in the Municipal Corporations Bill so that the proposed powers would be vested in the councillors.

Supporters of the Bill were J. Pease who said that the ratepayers would be the best judges of what their communities really wanted, and W.S. O'Brien who thought that the present Bills would give opportunities to the poorer people. At this stage, however, Wakley advised Buckingham to withdraw the Bills, and the House divided on the question of the crucial final clause. Twenty members voted in favour of the clause standing a part of the Bill, and thirty-six voted against. Buckingham was therefore forced to withdraw both Bills, and announced his intention of reintroducing them the following year if in the meantime successful in incorporating the measures in the Municipal Corporations Bill.<sup>26</sup>

The arguments of several speakers on the matter of these public literary institutions make it clear that they had in mind small local versions of the national institutions such as the British Museum, but which would be frequented by all classes of society. Others seem to have envisaged mechanics' institutes freed from the initial capital and ensuing current expenditure debts which in many cases crippled the voluntary institutions, which had to rely on workers' subscriptions or which either closed or came under middle-class control.

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<sup>26</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons op.cit.* pp.517, 532, 561-562; Barrow. *op.cit.* vol III, pp.2318, 2586-2588 and xcv.

### 3.3 The Public Institutions Bill, 1836

Buckingham moved to bring in the revised Bills on 16 February 1836, at once meeting opposition from Tooke on the question of compulsory rate assessment. Hume supported the Bills "so as to provide proper instruction and amusement for the health and recreation of the humbler classes. This is far better", he said, "than driving them to seek their recreation in public houses, to the injury of their pockets, their health, and their morals". In an early reference to continuing, life-long education, Wyse pointed out that "It is a great mistake to imagine that education ceases when a boy leaves the threshold of his school—that education is nothing unless followed up and continued; and the primary education of schools must be followed up by public libraries and institutions". Potter was more concerned with moral welfare, pointing out that the working-classes toiled from Monday morning to Saturday evening, and that to "drive them from the public house, the gin-shop, and the low gambling-house, we must give them some fit substitute". Leave was then given to bring in the Bills again.<sup>27</sup>

On 25 February Hume presented a petition on behalf of the Paisley Society for the Prevention and Cure of Intemperance, and of the Paisley Youths' Temperance Society, praying that the proposed Public Walks and Public Institutions Bills would become law.<sup>28</sup> Four days later Buckingham presented the revised Bills, but because of the enormous pressure of public business on the time of the House the second reading was postponed nine times (usually in the small hours after all-night sittings). Following their committal the committee stage itself was then postponed eleven times due to pressure of other business, and Buckingham decided to withdraw the Bills until the 1837 session, complaining at the complete lack of assistance given by the government in providing time for private Bills which was resulting in the withdrawal of the parliamentary right of individual members of the House.<sup>29</sup> So ended the second attempt of the temperance movement to legalise public institutions and gardens.

### 3.4 The Public Walks and Institutions Bill, 1837

As noted above, Buckingham and his friends considered it advisable to combine the provisions into a single Bill for presentation in 1837 because of the problems experienced during the two previous years. On 16 February 1837 Buckingham, Tulk and Brotherton were given permission to bring in the new Bill, which was introduced on

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<sup>27</sup> Barrow. *op.cit.*, 1836, pp.175-176; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol.91, 1836, p.42.

<sup>28</sup> Barrow. *op.cit.* pp.344-345; *Journal of the House of Commons. op.cit.* p.86.

<sup>29</sup> Barrow. *op.cit.* pp.395-2838; *Journal of the House of Commons. op.cit.* pp.95-755.

2 March. At that time it was ordered to be printed under the title of a "Bill for the establishment of Public Walks and Playgrounds, and of Public Institutions, Libraries and Museums, for the purpose of promoting health, morals, instruction, and enjoyments of the people". At the same time Buckingham, Tulk and Wyse brought in the Public Houses Regulation Bill to diminish crime and misery.<sup>30</sup>

Once again pressure of government business required all-night sittings, and delayed the second reading five times. On 25 May a petition was presented by Mr Scholefield on behalf of the Birmingham Mechanics' Institution, praying that the Public Walks and Institutions Bill would become law. On 7 June the second reading was opposed by Tooke (who had been a member of the Committee on Public Walks) on the same ground of the heavy sixpenny rate which could be levied on the authorisation of small meetings without control or appeal. Nevertheless his proposal to postpone the reading for six months was defeated, only Sir Robert Inglis supporting his view.

Most of the support for the Bill talked about the public parks rather than the educational provisions, but Buckingham received the first backing from the government side in the person of Charles Poulett Thomson (President of the Board of Trade between May 1835 and August 1839). Thomson admitted that he found much detail objectionable, but thought that the amusements and instruction provided for in the Bill would be greatly to the advantage of the lower classes. Tooke withdrew his proposal, stating that he did so because the President of the Board of Trade had supported Buckingham, but got his revenge a few minutes later by supporting the second reading of Buckingham's Merchant Shipping Regulation Bill when Thomson objected to it on the ground that the details would all have to be amended in committee. Tooke complained that all the arguments then used against the shipping Bill had been used in favour of the Public Walks and Institutions Bill.<sup>31</sup> Thomson's important though qualified support may have been due to the fact that he was at least technically responsible for the creation and management of the Schools of Art—a position which put him into more contact with Ewart and others in the centre of art education, and on the fringes of the public institutions movement.

After this victory it seemed that there was a better chance that the Bill would get through the House that session, but it was not to be. The committee stage had been

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<sup>30</sup> Barrow. *op.cit.*, 1837, pp.208-209 and 410; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol.92, 1837, pp.58 and 103.

<sup>31</sup> Barrow. *op.cit.* pp.696-1737 and xlix-mlx; *Journal of the House of Commons. op.cit.* pp.174-445.

postponed only once to 21 June due to pressure of government business, when the death of King William IV occurred on the 20 June and Victoria was proclaimed Queen. Parliamentary business was therefore suspended following the loyal addresses. Buckingham's Bill was postponed until the morrow, but in fact no further action on it is reported.<sup>32</sup> Buckingham himself resigned his seat in the same year to undertake international temperance work, no doubt influenced by the constant defeats of his parliamentary attempts at social reform and by the desertion in 1836 of some of his Whig friends (especially Lord John Russell) when the House rejected his claims for compensation against the East India Company.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4. William Lovett and 'Educational Chartism'

One of the most important socio-political organisations which attempted to harness and direct the various aspirations of the working classes was that of the Chartists, which helped to focus attention on a number of issues in the 1830s and 1840s. That Chartism was not so much a single-minded movement as a convenient label for a complex body of ideas and hopes and actions is indicated by the various ways in which they were expressed in different parts of the country.<sup>34</sup> There is evidence that in Manchester at any rate, education for the working poor rather than their participation in political activities was proposed by the middle class cotton masters as the first course of action. This was echoed by the *Manchester Guardian* in an editorial in 1838 linking education with abstinence: "Let the people have a good education, and, with the habits it would induce, the bribe of the intoxicating draught would be less powerful. Till then the elective franchise could not with safety be extended".<sup>35</sup>

Others saw children's education as being a part of the reform agenda rather than an alternative to political participation. In 1842 Philp was following Lovett's ideas in advocating schools and libraries,<sup>36</sup> whilst in the following year Henry Vincent's programme in his Ipswich election campaign included "the provision of a more widespread education in order that 'the child of the honest poor man should have its mind

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<sup>32</sup> Barrow. *op.cit.* pp.1866, 1930 and 1940; *Journal of the House of Commons. op.cit.* pp.474 and 494.

<sup>33</sup> Turner. *op.cit.* p.345.

<sup>34</sup> Briggs, A. (ed.). *Chartist studies*. (London: Macmillan St Martin's Press. 1959.) *passim*.

<sup>35</sup> Read, D. Chartism in Manchester. In, Briggs. *op.cit.* pp.38-39.

<sup>36</sup> Pugh, R.B. Chartism in Somerset and Wiltshire. In, Briggs. *op.cit.* p.200.



trained in everything requisite for the promotion of its spiritual, moral, political and social interests".<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of the educational activities of many Chartists and the widely held belief that they were able to influence the Whig Government into setting up the Committee of the Privy Council on Education in 1839, it has been suggested that in fact the Government was more concerned than the Chartists were.<sup>38</sup>

Although it may be questioned whether Chartism was in fact a movement *per se* because of the diverse and sometimes differing objectives of the various groups and individuals concerned, it was certainly (as Inkster wrote about the contemporary mechanics' institute movement) an important "aspect of a wide process of structural differentiation occurring concomitantly with profound social change"<sup>39</sup> during the decades immediately before the 1850 Public Libraries and Museums Act. It had its roots in several social movements, and parallels may be seen between Chartism and other socio-political activities on the early nineteenth century. Dobbs, for example, noted the early co-operative movement, and the Owenite propagandist crusade which lasted about ten years from 1835. The Association of All Classes of All Nations (renamed the Rational Religionists) divided the country into districts, and "social missionaries were appointed to go their rounds, lecturing and holding discussions. In some towns 'halls of science' were erected, where a form of service was held; and many of the branches opened schools for young and old". By 1841 "there were eighteen missionaries and paid lecturers at work, in addition to many who rendered voluntary service" in disseminating the principles of Robert Owen. "They were among the foremost advocates of temperance and self-discipline, which they aided by their example; and they preached education as the basis of all reform".<sup>40</sup>

One person associated with the early co-operative movement was William Lovett, whose writings were strongly influenced by Owenite principles. Rejecting the use of force as a social weapon, he advocated uniting the working classes "upon the principles of knowledge and temperance, and the management of their own affairs".<sup>41</sup> The 1830s and 1840s saw not only the temperance movement, but the rise and flourishing of

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37 Fearn, H. Chartism in Suffolk. In, Briggs. *op.cit.* p.167.

38 Mather, F.C. The Government and the Chartists. In, Briggs. *op.cit.* pp.400-401.

39 Inkster, I. The social context of an educational movement: a revisionist approach to the English mechanics' institutes, 1820-1850. *Oxford Review of Education*, vol.2, no.3, 1976, p.299.

40 Dobbs, A.E. *Education & social movements 1700-1850*. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1919.) p.222.

41 *ibid.* p.226.

teetotalism as advocated by Buckingham. The first Temperance Society, started by Henry Forbes in Bradford in 1830 and copied in other towns in the same year, were hostile to spirits and excess drinking rather than to beer and wines. The drinking of spirits had greatly increased as the duty was lowered in 1823 and again in 1825, and the sale of whisky was legalised in England (having previously been smuggled from Scotland in smaller quantities). Several prominent Chartists and other reformers were members of these temperance societies, though Pakington's Beer Act (3 & 4 Vict. cap.61) of 1840 seems to have gained some support from the contention that Chartist meetings were held in beerhouses which had become the social clubs of the labouring population.<sup>42</sup>

Tawney has summed up the writing of William Lovett as encompassing four principles, which epitomised the philosophy of Chartism:<sup>43</sup>

- (i) Social evils are the consequence of social institutions, and can be removed by altering them.
- (ii) The cause of social evils is Government by a political oligarchy which has an interest in maintaining them.
- (iii) The condition of any genuine democracy is education: to work for the creation of a national system of education is the first duty of reformers. It is the one certain instrument of emancipation.
- (iv) The cause of democracy is international.

If Government vested interests prevent the establishment of a democracy through education—and certainly there was no sign of a national system being set up—then it would be necessary for the People to found their own educational institutions and also to work towards a State-aided system.

Born in 1800, Lovett was a person of many interests, one of which concerned books and reading. He stated that he was fond of reading as a boy in Cornwall though he found difficulty in obtaining books due to cost and character. "Therefore the Bible, and Prayer and hymn-book, and a few religious tracts, together with fragments of an old magazine, and occasionally one of the nonsensical pamphlets described" were all he read until he was over twenty-one years old. These nonsensical "books in circulation for the masses were a few story-books and romances, filled with absurdities about giants,

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<sup>42</sup> Hammond, J.L. and Hammond, B. *The age of the Chartists, 1832-1854: a study of discontent*. (London: Longmans, Green & Co. 1930.) pp.144-167.

<sup>43</sup> Tawney, R.H. Introduction to: Lovett, W. *Life and struggles of William Lovett*. (London: Bell & Sons. 1920.) pp.xviii-xxvi.

spirits, goblins, and supernatural horrors".<sup>44</sup> Later, he joined a small literary association (called The Liberals) in London which "was composed chiefly of working men, who paid a small weekly subscription towards the formation of a select library of books for circulation among one another" and who met twice each week for discussion on literary, political or metaphysical topics. He also joined the Mechanics' Institute, and attended debates in Tom's Coffee House and Lunt's Coffee House and other places, and even skimmed on meals in order to buy books for himself.<sup>45</sup>

When about twenty-nine years old he became interested in the temperance question, and in 1829 drew up the national petition which Hume presented to Parliament calling for the Sunday opening of museums, mechanic and scientific institutions, libraries, and exhibitions of art and nature, to give workers something to do other than drinking.<sup>46</sup> He was associated with Hetherington in the removal of the stamp duty on newspapers, and with cheap publications for the working classes.<sup>47</sup> Lovett is perhaps best known for the foundation of the London Working Men's Association in 1836 as "a political school of self-instruction" for the masses, "in which they should accustom themselves to examine great *social and political principles*, and by their publicity and free discussion help to form a sound and healthful public opinion throughout the country". Removal of the stamp tax, education, information, publishing and a library were to be the means by which the objects were to be realised.<sup>48</sup>

An important *Address to the Working Classes on the Subject of National Education* was issued in 1837, which began by stating "that poverty, inequality, and political injustice, are involved in giving to one portion of society the blessings of education, and leaving the other in ignorance". Referring to crime, the address pointed out that society by omission fostered crime and "allowed the children of misery to be instructed in vice"; the only "wholesome" advice that criminals were given was before being sentenced to die. It was held that the Government had the duty to provide the means of education through taxation, but the *Address* opposed "placing such immense power and influence in the hands of Government as that of selecting the teachers and superintendents, the books and kinds of instruction, and the whole management of

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<sup>44</sup> Lovett, W. *Life and struggles of William Lovett*. (London: Bell & Sons. 1920.) pp.21-22.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.* pp.35-37.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.* pp.58-59.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.* pp.60-65.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* pp.94-95.

schools in each locality". These were to consist of Infant Schools (ages three to six years old), Preparatory Schools (ages six to nine) in which temperance in eating and drinking was to be inculcated, High Schools (ages nine to twelve) and Finishing Schools or Colleges (for all above twelve). They would be open in the evening for all adults for "mutual instruction, societies, singing, lectures, or any other rational pursuits or amusements, unassociated with the means of intoxication and vice". These community centres for adult education and educative activities would not have their own dedicated premises, however. <sup>49</sup>

During 1838 the 'People's Charter' was developed, and in the following year the Working Men's Association sent delegates to the Chartist Association. Despite some overlap in membership of the two associations they co-existed somewhat uneasily as respectively advocating 'moral force' and 'physical force' to achieve their aims. In spite of Lovett being of the moral force faction, he and John Collins were sentenced to one year's imprisonment in Warwick Gaol for their involvement in the publication of the 1839 Address. <sup>50</sup> Whilst there, Lovett commenced his pamphlet on *Chartism*, which was published under the joint authorship of Lovett and Collins in 1841, following their release. <sup>51</sup> The purpose was to persuade Chartists "to form themselves into a National Association for the erection of halls and schools of various kinds for the purposes of education—for the establishing of libraries; the printing of tracts", and for other ways of disseminating propaganda in favour of the Charter. <sup>52</sup> This work helped to confirm the moral force faction members in their role as 'educational Chartists'.

Lovett opened an unsuccessful bookshop in London for a short time after his return, and was induced to draw up a plan to inaugurate the National Association of the United Kingdom, for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People, based on his booklet on *Chartism*. In it he suggested circulating libraries of between one and two hundred volumes each for rotating to towns and villages, the books to be lent freely to members. The school buildings were to double as public halls for lectures, readings, discussions and other non-alcohol activities for adults in the evenings. Pleasure gardens, hot and cold baths, museums and laboratories were also to be provided

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<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* pp.138-150.

<sup>50</sup> Howell, G. *A history of the Working Men's Association from 1836 to 1850*. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Frank Graham. 2nd ed 1970) pp.90-91.

<sup>51</sup> Lovett, W. and Collins, J. *Chartism: a new organization of the people, embracing a plan for the education and improvement of the people*. (London. 1841.)

<sup>52</sup> Lovett. *op.cit.* p.240.

wherever possible.<sup>53</sup> He continued to advocate teetotal public institutions for many years, was associated with the National Hall which opened in London in 1842, drew up the constitution for the Nottingham People's College in 1846 and the Nottingham People's Hall in 1856, and was a witness before the 1849 Select Committee on Public Libraries (see Chapter 4 below).<sup>54</sup>

## 5. Other Writers on Public Institutions

Although it may not appear to be justifiable to refer to the various concepts of public institutions as forming a cohesive social movement, there are sufficient references in the literature to indicate that many people were thinking along somewhat similar lines. Together they were helping to create a public opinion which often led to the establishment of community education centres under a variety of names—from Working Men's Colleges in mid-century to Besant's People's Palace at the end. An examination of a selection of these scattered writings suggests that there was much concern at the lack of physical and educational amenities for the working classes in the first part of the century, which developed into a more holistic approach during the second half when the Public Libraries and Museums Acts were in operation:-

### 5.1 "J.R." and community housing (1836)

At the same time that Buckingham was working to introduce his Public Institutions Bills, others were making proposals in a somewhat similar vein. One of these (known only by the initials "J.R.") suggested that mechanics should form co-operatives to buy wholesale from merchants in order to cut out retailers' profits. In order to avoid high rents, proprietors might erect quadrangles of fifty houses on each side (each consisting of a ground floor sitting room with two bedrooms above), with a large communal building in the middle. This would have hot and cold water for washing and heating, a kitchen for the two hundred families, and a dining room for communal use though food could be taken home. The author of the proposal suggested that the dining room:<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* pp.249-254.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* pp.259, 293, 329 and 372.

<sup>55</sup> R—, J. Domestic arrangements of the working classes. *London and Westminster Review*, vol.25, no.2, July 1836. pp.459-465.

might be provided with a library of books, periodicals, and newspapers; it might serve as a school-room morning and afternoon, and in the evening as a reading-room, lecture-room, and mechanics' institute. If necessary, another story might be raised above it, in order to provide for an infant school, hospital, or nursery.

Because the proprietor would be assured of the custom of the two hundred families, he could buy wholesale and sell to them at very little profit on individual items.

## 5.2 Charles Baker and mechanics' institutions (1837)

Charles Baker, Director of the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb in Doncaster, was an annual member of the Central Society of Education. For its first publication in 1837 he contributed papers on 'The Education of the Senses, as Exhibited in the Instruction of the Blind, and the Deaf and Dumb', and on 'Mechanics' Institutions and Libraries'. In the latter paper he traced the movement for workers' instruction to a mutual improvement society which had existed in Birmingham since about 1780, and 'The Sunday Society' which was established before 1790. These amalgamated in 1796 as 'The Brotherly Society' which organised lectures and classes, and led to the formation of the Artizans' Library in the following year.<sup>56</sup> Using the annual reports of various institutions, and the correspondence files of the Society for Diffusing Useful Knowledge, Baker detailed the activities of several of the major mechanics' institutes and noted that in England there were about one hundred towns with populations of 20,000 or more, most of which had all the desired features of "a library, reading-room, lectures, classes, museum of models, apparatus, and natural history, and a preparatory day-school for the children of members and others". In the case of townships with populations between 10,000 and 20,000 however, relatively few had mechanics' institutes at that time.<sup>57</sup> The real problem, therefore, lay in the lack of provision in these smaller townships, which Baker felt ought to be able to support limited facilities on a voluntary basis. Buckingham's Bills would have solved the problem by establishing rate-supported institutions in towns of 10,000 and over, and this was the population base actually used by the museums and libraries legislation of 1845 and 1850 respectively.

Baker's thinking went further, however, for he advocated an expansion of the Schools of Design system by connecting them wherever possible with mechanics' institutions. In this he referred to the comment in the Report of the House of Commons on Arts and Manufactures to the effect that some institutes "have disseminated much

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<sup>56</sup> Baker, C. Mechanics' Institutions and libraries. In, Central Society of Education. *First publication*. (London: Taylor & Walton. 1837) pp.216-217.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.* p.238.

valuable instruction in the arts", citing Coventry, Glasgow and Manchester in particular. Baker advocated a national provision "rafted "on the majority of our existing Mechanics' Institutions",<sup>58</sup> an idea which to a large extent was effected when many schools of art were operating under public library legislation in the second half of the century. Baker's concept of public institutions was still centred largely on workers' voluntarism, though he did suggest that in some towns gardens and museums "might be encouraged by the municipal governments".<sup>59</sup>

### 5.3 Duppa and mechanics' institutions (1839)

Another annual subscriber to the Central Society of Education was B.F. Duppa, who was also a member of its Committee of Management and its Honorary Secretary and Editor. To its first publication of 1827 he contributed major papers on 'Objects of the Society'; on 'Industrial Schools for the Peasantry'; an 'Analysis of the Reports of the Committee of the Manchester Statistical Society on the State of Education in the Boroughs of Manchester, Liverpool, Salford, and Bury'; and on 'Statistical Inquiries of the Central Society of Education into the Social Condition of the Working Classes', in addition to several shorter papers.

In 1839 Duppa compiled an optimistic work on mechanics' institutions on behalf of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and saw the best of these as community cultural centres in the following words:<sup>60</sup>

Hence the varied features which the most perfect possess. Those of the highest class afford not only to persons of matured intellect the means of pursuing the highest branches of science,—evening classes for persons whose education has been neglected, and who stand in need even of elementary information—instruction in particular arts (such as drawing and modelling), which lay the foundation for skill in different occupations—but even schools for children. There are public lectures, sometimes, though rarely, followed by examinations for the purpose of testing the knowledge of those who attend. There are classes in which the pupil is not only a hearer, but is catechised by the teacher. There are libraries and museums, and even arrangements for social meetings, in which recreation and instruction are combined.

He recognised that few mechanics' institutes actually reached this ideal, and in fact proposed a three-stage classification in stating that:

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58 *ibid.* pp.243-244.

59 *ibid.* p.253.

60 Duppa, B.F. *A manual for mechanics' institutions*. Published under the superintendence of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longmans; and at the Society's Offices. 1839.) 18-19.

They differ greatly in their character, and may be classed under the following heads:-

- I. Those which have—
  1. Lectures regularly delivered by professional lecturers.
  2. Classes with paid masters.
  3. Classes for mutual instruction.
  4. Library, museum, apparatus.
  5. A school.
  
- II. Those which have—  
Lectures and classes, or either of them, with gratuitous instructors, together with a library, museum, and apparatus.
  
- III. Those which have—  
Library, museum, &c., without lectures.

This classification scheme may also be employed, when inverted, as a method of categorising later public library systems, many of which evolved into community education centres—a theme which is developed particularly in Chapters 5 to 8 below. Possibly with Buckingham's failed Public Institutions Bills of 1835-1837 in mind, however, he considered that it was probably "impracticable even for the government to cause institutions, with their lecturers, teachers, libraries, museums, to be founded and generally resorted to throughout the country"—though agreeing that this was a desirable objective. <sup>61</sup>

#### 5.4 Edward Edwards and The Arts (1840)

The Report of the Committee appointed by the House of Commons (on the motion of William Ewart) "to enquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the Arts and of the principles of Design" appeared in 1836, and a copy of it was read by Edward Edwards who responded by helping to found 'The Art Union'—a society formed to promote the recommendations of the report. This report dealt basically with three areas: (i) elementary instruction in the principles of design (schools, Schools of Design, mechanics' institutions, and books on art); (ii) cultivating public taste (universities, public galleries and museums, and voluntary associations); and (iii) financial and legal matters (duties, copyright, constitutions and competitions).

In 1840, at which time he held a minor post as a cataloguer in the British Museum, Edwards published a work in which he surveyed the current practice and appreciation of the plastic arts in England. Little had been done by the central government since the publication of the Committee's report, and Edwards's book set out

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<sup>61</sup> Duppa, B.F. *op.cit.* p.57.



to amplify and supplement the details given in it. After detailing the foundation of the Schools of Design he contributed a useful account of the management of art galleries and museums, which at that date were almost all maintained by the state or by institutions such as universities. Nevertheless, Edwards opined that there must first be a more general educational reform, stating that: "we must first provide a sufficiency of schools of *Religion, Morals, and the rudiments of learning* (all so woefully [*sic*] deficient in our land), before we talk of providing schools of *design*, for the general population. As regards schools specifically for industrial arts (the Schools of Design) which should be established throughout the country, he advocated that the central government should match with special grants the funds raised locally—presumably on a voluntary basis and not from local government funds.<sup>62</sup> An interesting suggestion was that charges from patents should be devoted to industrial art museums, though central superintendence should be united with local management. Art museum lectures (a feature of some later local public museums as noted in Chapter 5 below) and good catalogues were seen as important also.<sup>63</sup>

It was only in the area of school education, however, that Edwards at this stage of his career contemplated central and local government involvement. Whilst acknowledging the advantages of voluntary effort in popular education as well as the fact that it was "subject to great fluctuation and to many drawbacks", he believed that it was "the business of government to encourage, to aid, and to direct, but not to supersede, such efforts". He supported Brougham's 1838 Bill for promoting education in England and Wales, which would have allowed town councils to levy an education rate, but did not extend that power to adult education.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, he believed that government provision of public galleries and museums was essential, whilst envisaging voluntary adjuncts such as mechanics' institutions and lyceums.<sup>65</sup>

## 5.5 Bayley and the Sheffield People's College (1842)

The Working Men's Colleges have been credited with contributing to the University Extension Movement, and having owed much to the writings of Lovett—particularly his *Address to the Working Classes on the Subject of National Education*

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<sup>62</sup> Edwards, E. *The administrative economy of the fine arts in England*. (London: Saunders and Otley. 1840.) pp.98-100.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.* p.113.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.* pp.277 and 281.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.* pp.326 and 343.

which was published in 1837.<sup>66</sup> In 1837 also, the Address to Working Men's Associations coupled temperance with workers' education, stressing that "we should also avoid by every possible means, holding our meetings at public-houses" and stating that the building of a select library was essential.<sup>67</sup> The Rev R.S. Bayley and other pioneers of the People's College in Sheffield were influenced by Lovett's writings, which is evidenced by the marked similarity between the aims and provisions of the People's College in Sheffield and Lovett's educational schemes noted in §4.1 above. Bayley himself had lectured at the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute, and had noted the narrowness of the subjects and facilities offered there. The People's College was founded in a belief that workers would respond to an opportunity to study the higher branches of knowledge, and to respond to beauty and truth wherever it could be found. So history, logic, Greek, Latin, and modern languages were taught in addition to the usual elementary subjects. When Bayley left for London in 1848 it was reorganised "as a self-governing and self-supporting institution" by some of the students, but Kelly notes that "without Bayley's inspiration the humane studies languished, and the old heresy of vocational interest cropped up again" in the 1850s. The College became part of the city's technical education provision, and was demolished in 1874.<sup>68</sup> A similar argument surrounded the work of the mechanics' institutes, some supporting the concept of vocational training, whilst others applauded the widening of their function to include general subjects and even amusements.

One important outcome was the establishment of the London Working Men's College in 1854, under the influence of the Rev Frederick Denison Maurice and the Christian Socialist movement which had moved away from the more secular socialism of Owen which had influenced earlier adult education. Christian Socialism also saw education as being the basic social problem, so that when Maurice lost his Chair at King's College, London, it was decided to establish a new institution with him as Principal. Like the Sheffield People's College, and unlike the mechanics' institutions which were vocationally oriented, the London institution emphasised the humane studies as a means of enriching the personal lives of members.<sup>69</sup> The London example was followed by other towns, with varying degrees of success in attracting and keeping the

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<sup>66</sup> Jepson, N.A. *The beginnings of English university adult education*. (London: Michael Joseph. 1973.) p. 49.

<sup>67</sup> Lovett. *op.cit.* pp.96-98.

<sup>68</sup> Kelly, T. *A history of adult education in Great Britain*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 1970.) pp.182-183.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* pp.183-186.

working classes and in maintaining a liberal educational character. In turn they were one of the influences on Henry Solly in promoting Working Men's Clubs and Educational Institutes, which placed greater emphasis on the recreational needs of workers and their families (see §5.8 below).

### 5.6 J.W. Hudson and municipal people's colleges (1851)

Writing just a year after the passing of the Public Libraries and Museums Act, Hudson decried the tendency of mechanics' institutions to succumb to the temptations of novelty and change, instead of developing systematic courses of lectures and classes in chemistry and mechanics. Although admitting that "concerts, dramatic lectures, and great public soirées" appeared to have convinced the public that literary institutions had become social necessities, this had not led to permanent support for them. He was a great believer in systematic study, and thought that the widening of the activities of mechanics' and literary institutions was contributing to their demise.

At the same time he took the passing of the library legislation in 1850 as indicating the way that communities could develop their educational facilities:

The establishment of Free Circulating Libraries, will be regarded as a boon, but the time (we will hope) is not far distant, when every large town in the kingdom, will support from its local rates, its people's college, containing its free circulating library, free news-room, free lectures, and free elementary evening classes.

Unfortunately he did not expand on this concept, but it does appear that he had adopted the educational ideas of Duppa and Lovett and given them a permanency through local government financing.<sup>70</sup> Like other writers developing concepts of public institutions, Hudson envisaged an educational institution containing features found in many mechanics' institutions. Later in the century, however, it was those many public libraries which provided news-rooms, lectures and evening classes (though not always free) which put Hudson's brief vision into effect.

### 5.7 F.W. Naylor, rural libraries and continuous education (1858)

Parish and rural subscription libraries had been in existence for many years before the passing of the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1850, though many were moribund or barely surviving. The Rev. F.W. Naylor had been responsible for establishing a village book club in his parish of Upton, which developed into a

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<sup>70</sup> Hudson. *op.cit.* pp.ix-x.

subscription library. In 1843 he published a pamphlet on *Popular libraries in rural districts* in which he set out his ideas to meet the cultural needs of villagers. In 1858, by which time only a handful of the larger towns had adopted the Public Libraries Acts, he published a second work in which he pointed out that many of the non-statutory libraries in rural areas were inappropriate for the interest of and use by the villagers. The main importance of this work is that it carries Naylor's thinking beyond reading to include lectures and discussion groups, in order that self-culture could be continued after leaving elementary school. The title of this work explains its scope as: *Continuous education; or, Practical suggestion about libraries, discussion-meetings, lectures, and other means of promoting self-culture, with especial reference to rural and suburban districts, to which are added remarks upon half-time system, tea-festivals, suitable books, Working Men's Associations, village cricket clubs, etc.*

These features were not new, but in drawing them together he joined other writers in recognising that education should not cease on leaving school, and that the use of books led naturally to discussing their contents with others. Lectures, too, became a part of continuous education if dealing with the humanities, and if they were well and fully presented for more than their entertainment value. In this he was in agreement with earlier writers on mechanics' institutions such as Duppa, though Naylor does not appear to institutionalise his concept. Rather, like Buckingham he included public parks and gardens as part of his plan for the total moral and physical welfare of the people, and saw musical performances, galleries, museums and scientific exhibitions as "wholesome and beneficial recreation". His was a vision of a public institution without walls.<sup>71</sup>

## 5.8 Henry Solly and Working Men's Clubs (1862)

The Rev Henry Solly may be described as a practical Christian who developed his socialist ideas as a pastor with a Unitarian educational background and Baptist training, and whose ministry was continued as Secretary of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union from 1862. He held an holistic view of the needs of working class families which may be summed up as that:<sup>72</sup>

Recreation must go hand in hand with Education and Temperance if we would have real and permanent improvement; while efforts should be specially made to awaken or cherish a brotherly spirit of mutual helpfulness among Working Men themselves, as well as between them and the classes socially above them.

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<sup>71</sup> Kelly, T. Continuous education: a nineteenth century pioneer. *Journal of Librarianship*, vol.1, no.1, January 1969, pp.62-67.

<sup>72</sup> Solly, H. *Working Men's Social Clubs and Educational Institutes*. (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Kent & Co. 2nd ed 1904.) p.31.

His first pastorate (1840-1842) was in Yeovil where he discussed workers' needs with Chartist labourers, and his practical Christianity led him to publish his first work *What says Christianity to the present distress?* in the year that he moved to Tavistock. He numbered Lovett, Howell and Denis on Maurice among his friends, and enlisted the support of Lord Brougham as first President of the Union when he began his campaign to establish Working Men's Clubs in every town because he saw a need for broader-based and more democratic institutions than the mechanics' institutes had become. In the same year that the Sheffield People's College was founded by Bayley, Solly formed an educational club in Yeovil for the mutual benefit of workers, but with few recreational features—the realisation of the necessity of that feature came later in his life. In his account of the Union, Solly notes individual village developments scattered throughout the country but without indicating whether they had an influence on his own ideas.

It was the establishment in 1854 of the London Working Men's College, by the Rev F.D. Maurice and others, which caught his imagination; this was consolidated by the Westminster Working Men's Club which was established by Adeline Cooper in 1860. The work of Miss Cooper, and of Mrs Bayly of the Notting-hill Workmen's Hall, had such an influence that in the following year Solly, who was then Presbyterian minister in Lancaster, unsuccessfully launched an appeal for a million pounds to establish clubs in every town. Nevertheless, when a consequent meeting inaugurated the Union he became its first Secretary, and in this post he influenced the philosophy and development of the movement for many years.

The Union's prospectus stated that Working Men's Clubs were to be an intermediate step between Working Men's Colleges and the public houses, supplying the recreation and amusement often missing from mechanics' institutions which in any case had been "given up to the trading and middle classes". These Clubs were to have rooms "for conversation, refreshments, recreation &c.; and others for classes, reading, lectures, and music. A library of entertaining and instructive books, scientific apparatus, diagrams, etc., a supply of newspapers, and some works of art" should also be provided. These would form a counter-attraction to the public house, where "reformed drunkards" often returned for social enjoyment. Solly noted that they were democratic institutions whose primary object was "social intercourse, amusements, and rational recreation" but which also had educational and educative facilities. Females were to be admitted to the library and lectures (and to classes where female supervision was present). Membership was to be for those over eighteen years, smoking to be allowed (in a separate room), but "no intoxicating drinks, betting, or gambling" was permitted. Finally, they were to be Societies to which workers could belong rather than places to

which they could go, and to further a good atmosphere they should "be thoroughly unsectarian, socially, politically, and religiously".<sup>73</sup>

The movement was successful to the extent that by about 1867 there were between 280 and 300 Working Men's Clubs and Institutes in Great Britain. With an average of 171 members each, these Clubs had a membership of about 45,000 working men and youths.<sup>74</sup> By 1904, Hall was able to report that there were about 992 Clubs with about 380,000 members; only 48 were actually temperance clubs. Their community influence was such that some 3,500 of their members served "on Public Boards, from Parliament to the Parish Council". To encourage the educational side of the Clubs' activities, the Union itself maintained a circulating library of 14,000 books which were sent on loan in boxes of thirty books each to member bodies—though Hall noted that Club libraries were becoming less necessary with the spread of public libraries.<sup>75</sup>

### 5.9 Walter Besant and the London People's Palace (1897)

That the concept of, and need, for community educational and recreational centres was still alive at the end of the nineteenth century, is evidenced by the novel *All sorts and conditions of men* (1882) written by Sir Walter Besant in which he described a fictional 'Palace of Joy' set in the east end of London. It is apparent that existing institutions did not match his ideas—in many parts of London the parishes into which it was divided were only just beginning to adopt the public library legislation, and working men's clubs were more recreational than educational. Besant was a prolific writer of both fiction and non-fiction books, who claimed to be observant rather than original. In his preface to a new (1897) edition of his book he wrote: "That novelist becomes most popular who is best able to catch and to represent the ideas of the day, the forces acting on the present. I think that this story did so present the ideas of the day". These words were written fifteen years after the book was first published, by which time "the ideas which were advanced...have spread over so wide an area, and have produced results so unexpected and so full of promise for the future".<sup>76</sup> Whether or not Besant had successfully

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<sup>73</sup> *ibid.* pp.31-32 and 41-42.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* pp.66 and 68.

<sup>75</sup> Hall, B.T. The harvest of the Rev. Henry Solly's work. Appendix to: Solly. *op.cit.* pp.179-181, and 197.

<sup>76</sup> Besant, W. *All sorts and conditions of men: an impossible story.* (London: Chatto & Windus. 1913 impression of 1897 new edition.) p.v. [Page references are to this edition.]

captured the ideas of his day, the concept embedded in his book seems to have remained a unique social experiment in real life.

Briefly, Angela Messenger (alias Kennedy) was heiress to a brewery and property in Whitechapel, in an area where "there are no gardens, avenues, theatres, art galleries, libraries, or any kind of amusement whatever" (p.173). She determined to build a cultural centre there, she "would plant her Palace in this region, the most fitting place, because the most dreary; because here there exists nothing, absolutely nothing, for the imagination to feed upon" (p.175). The sentiments were basically those of Bayley and Solly, but money was no problem to an heiress. Her Palace of Delight would be open to everyone—as the heroine remarked to her friend at Newnham College early in the novel: "The first thing in the emancipation of the [female] sex...is equal education" (p.10). It would contain libraries, reading rooms, clubs, music rooms, a school for music, a school for dancing, and a college of art (pp.66-67). There would be lectures, too, but "not in literature, but in letter-writing, especially love letter writing, versifying, novel-writing, and essay writing" (p.70).

As in the novel, so in real life—the People's Palace was actually built by Sir Edmund Currie in the Mile End Road in 1887, and flourished for some time (though the literary club itself was a signal failure<sup>77</sup>). Besant himself appealed in *The Athenaeum* (of 24 November 1888), as Chairman of the Library Committee, for contributions to its library which at that time had room for 200,000 volumes but had only 8,000 so far.<sup>78</sup> However, the management of the Palace was soon taken over by the Draper's Company as a polytechnic, becoming successively the East London Technical College and Queen Mary College.<sup>79</sup> At the turn of the century there was a proposal to transfer books from the People's Palace to the Public Library Committee of Mile End parish, but because of legal difficulties they remained "an integral part of the Palace and its scheme of education".<sup>80</sup>

The People's Palace was never supported by local rates, and lost its character as a public community institution to vocational interests as had the Sheffield People's College

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<sup>77</sup> Besant, W. *Autobiography*. (London: 1902.) p.244.

<sup>78</sup> news-item in the *Library Chronicle*, vol.5, 1888, p.197.

<sup>79</sup> Kelly, T. *A history of adult education in Great Britain*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 1970.) p.193.

<sup>80</sup> news-item in the *Library World*, vol. 2, No.15, September 1899, p.75.

many years before. Nevertheless, it remains an interesting experiment and an example of fiction becoming fact.

## 6. The triple alliance under the Public Libraries and Museums Acts.

The public libraries and museums legislation in Britain was not drawn up with a concept of public institutions in mind, but did give an opportunity for local government councils and their library staff to develop services which created *de facto* though not always strictly *de jure* institutions in many places in Great Britain. This possibility of using public libraries as community centres was also recognised overseas, and particularly in North America where the mechanics' institution and lyceum movements had been strong earlier in the century. For example, James Bain (of the Toronto Public Library) gathered some references together in 1893 which advocated that museums and galleries be provided in a triple alliance with libraries, and that lectures form a part of their educational work. He pointed out that the union of the three institutions had been successful in England, and that their functions were interdependent.<sup>81</sup>

In England, the provision of public museums and libraries followed naturally from the legislation, which was initiated by the 1845 Museums Act. When this was extended by the 1850 Public Libraries and Museums Act, it may be said that Parliament had unwittingly launched a movement which was to develop the multi-faceted public cultural and educational institutions which Buckingham and others had envisaged much earlier. Although municipalities and other towns were slow in adopting the legislation, it was a short step to translating the permitted "Museums of Art and Science" into art galleries, and when schools of science and art were permitted under the 1855 Act the way was open for both classes and lectures. Campbell pointed out that "the British...have allowed so many of their national organizations and services to develop without any clearly defined purpose or long-term planning", and that this allows local adaptation to circumstances and needs as well as resulting in divergences "which serve only to confuse and disunite".<sup>82</sup>

Certainly there was no uniformity in either thinking or provision of services by local governments through their public library complexes, and at any given time a

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<sup>81</sup> Bain, J. Lectures, museums, art galleries, etc., in connection with libraries. *Library Journal*, Vol 18, July 1893, pp.214-216.

<sup>82</sup> Campbell, A.K.D. *Non-book materials and non-bibliographic services in public libraries: a study of their development and of the controversies which have surrounded them from 1850 to 1964*. (unpublished Library Association F.L.A. thesis. 1965.) p.1.



particular library may be seen as having been at its own stage of development as a public institution. Those offering the most complete range of services—such as Liverpool and Wolverhampton—included libraries, museums, galleries, lectures, classes, and social functions; but there were many places which never developed beyond the provision of a library and perhaps either a museum or an art gallery.

